OISE, University of Toronto

Hosted by: Ashleigh Allen & Ben Gallagher

**Poems about anti-love, old beloveds &**

**the total chaos of love and its language**

**Workshop description:**

Our 90-minute creative writing workshop explores the creative possibilities these poems offer as we explore the interrelated themes of love and anti-love provide us, as we explore new ways to experience and reflect on the ways in which we create and destroy, engage and reject, actively seek and lazily ignore love. What is love, or a love that’s no longer present, anyway?

The purposes of this workshop are: to share contemporary poetry, experience the act of writing poetry in community, and to ultimately think about the possibilities for contemporary poetry in our lives and classrooms as writer educators. We aim to consider not only the content but also the sonic and structural choices poets make, as a way to consider the possibilities that a creative writing practice has to offer us as writers and educators.

We are grateful to be a part of a community that values engagement with writing and reading.

**Workshop outline:**

*(5 minutes)*

**Welcome participants & introductions / check-ins**

Names, pronouns, a word or two to describe how each person is feeling today

*(5 minutes)*

**Share the purpose of this workshop**: **To engage in reading/ writing about various dimensions of love and anti-love**

- Alongside the many many love poems written and being written, there are also poems that push back against love or contemplate other aspects of the feelings surrounding love, loss of love, and refusal of love.

- These poems also use language in ways quite different from the typical lyricism of love poetry, and offer a variety of perspectives on what/ who is worthy of love, and how we respond to the past and our sense of the future in relation to love/ our beloveds.

*(10-15 minutes)*

**Participants volunteer to read through all of the poems at least once (Quaker style)**

*(40-45 minutes)*

**Participants write**

Using the prompts offered, participants mute their mics and write (for 45 minutes). Participants are encouraged to consider: What else do you see happening with language and imagery and topics/themes in these poems? Feel free to include or mimic other things you notice in these poems or anything else that inspires you today!

After writing:Everyone is called back and invited (to voluntarily) share what they wrote or a section of what they wrote...

**POEMS:**

**Richard Brautigan, “I feel horrible she doesn’t”**

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/48582/i-feel-horrible-she-doesnt>

* Use the phrase “I feel \_\_\_\_\_\_ she doesn’t\_\_\_\_\_\_”

**Richard Brautigan, “Love poem”**

<https://allpoetry.com/poem/8508977-Love-Poem-by-Richard-Brautigan>

* Make a list of three things you don’t do when you’re single that you feel obligated to do with a partner and really relish in the luxury of that absense. (Brautigan writes, “it’s so nice not to…”)

**Audre Lorde, “Movement song”**

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/42581/movement-song>

* Describe a scene between lovers that is “beyond anger and failure”
* Use the phrase “do not remember me as” a few times in your poem
* Use the phrase “your goodbye is the promise of…”

**Etheridge Knight, "Feeling fucked up"**

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/48752/feeling-fucked-up>

* Address the Lord or a religious being/ person
* Write a list (long or short) using the word “fuck” to begin each item of things to “fuck off”. These can be physical or intangible or otherwise. Be as specific (ie: Coltrane) or vague (music) as you want

**David Trinidad, “A regret”**

https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/51086/a-regret

* Include some time/date/place information in parentheses
* Include something you’ve learned from a poem

**Ross Gay, "Love I'm done with you"**

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/92014/love-i39m-done-with-you>

* Finish your poem with “and besides…” then list some undesirable attributes of an ex partner

**Tracy K. Smith, “I Don’t Miss It”**

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/55521/i-dont-miss-it>

* Finish the phrase, “It’s impossible not to want…”
* Create a list of adjectives that work through negation: (eg colorless, shapeless) to use in your writing

**Anne Carson, “Hymn to Aphrodite” (fragment 1)**

<https://apoemaday.tumblr.com/post/161933467490/fragment-1>

* Predict the future, tell a fortune, or place a curse within your writing
* Repeat a phrase three times (eg: now again)
* Use an animal as a messenger

**(Jeff) Kirby, “Freer” (from *She’s Having a Doris Day*)**

* End your writing with a series of questions
* Reflect on a singer or celebrity of importance to you, alongside a previous love
* Has a “crush” ever made you change your mind about something?

*(5 minutes)*

**Ideas for exit conversation**. **Participants invited to discuss and reflect on the experience:**

* What did you notice as you read and wrote? Were you surprised by anything in particular?
* Benefits/ uses of a workshop like this?
* Do you think you will incorporate any of these poems, themes of the poems, or this method of writing together in a virtual room in your own teaching? In what specific ways? If you would use these texts, you’d use them in conjunction with what other texts/ ideas/ questions?
* Are your students writing creatively together in virtual spaces? What does that look and feel like?

**More resources**:

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/collections/101579/anti-love-poems>

https://poets.org/poem/i-cannot-live-you-640